

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CA-01 SY-05 SSO-00 SCS-06 SS-15
NEAE-00 /038 W

-----084012 221441Z /45

O 221315Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 520

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 KUWAIT 1710

FOR CA, SY, AND NEA/ARP

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ASEC, CASC (SCHERMERHONR, JOHN)

SUBJECT: COMPLAINT AGAINST EMBASSY BY JOHN SCHERMERHORN

REF: (A) STATE 71569, (B) KUWAIT 1474, (C) STATE 62434.

1. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, AND ESPECIALLY SINCE THE EVENTS IN SOUTH LEBANON, THE SECURITY CLIMATE IN THE MIDDLE EAST FOR AMERICANS HAS BEEN EVEN MORE HAZARDOUS THAN USUAL. IN KUWAIT, THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO HOSTILE CRITICISM, AND THE EMBASSY HAS TIGHTENED UP ITS NORMALLY STRINGENT SECURITY PROCEDURES TO PROTECT OUR PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND PERSONNEL AGAINST THE RISK OF TERRORIST ATTACK. (KUWAIT HAS A LARGE AND POTENTIALLY HOSTILE PALESTINIAN POPULATION.) AS MANY POSTS HAVE FOUND, SOME AMERICAN CITIZENS WILL ALWAYS TAKE OFFENSE ON LEARNING THAT CARRYING A US PASSPORT CANNOT EXEMPT THEM FROM SECURITY PROCEDURES DESIGNED TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF AMERICAN OFFICIALS SERVING ABROAD.

2. IT IS EMBASSY POLICY NOT TO PERMIT ANY VISITOR, AMERICAN OR FOREIGN, TO WANDER UNRESTRICTED IN THE EMBASSY COMPOUND. IN ADDITION, FOR SECURITY REASONS, WE DO NOT PERMIT THE USE OF CAMERAS IN THE COMPOUND OR IN
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THE CHANCERY. IN KUWAIT, THE CHANCERY, AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE AND OTHER EMBASSY FACILITIES ARE LOCATED IN AN ENCLOSED COMPOUND WHICH IS GUARDED BY A CONTINGENT OF THE KUWAIT NATIONAL GUARD. THESE GUARDS DO NOT NORMALLY STOP VISITORS TO THE COMPOUND BUT DEFER TO THE EMBASSY'S FSL GUARDS WHO INITIALLY SCREEN ALL VISITORS. HOWEVER, THEY MIGHT STOP A VISITOR IF HE ATTEMPTED TO PHOTOGRAPH

THEM. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, ARABS ARE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO BEING PHOTOGRAPHED, AND THE ARAB MILITARY EVEN MORE SO.

3. EMBASSY REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICER REMEMBERS CONTACT WITH AN AMERICAN CITIZEN ABOUT ONE WEEK AGO, AND SIMILARITY OF DETAILS LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT IT WAS MR. SCHERMERHORN. SUMMONED BY FSL GUARD TO THE COMPOUND GATE, RSO EXPLAINED POLITELY TO THIS VISITING AMCIT THAT IT IS NOT EMBASSY POLICY TO ALLOW VISITORS TO ENTER THE COMPOUND SOLELY FOR TOURISTIC OR PHOTOGRAPHIC PURPOSES. VISITING AMCIT DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHY, AND POINTED OUT TO RSO THAT HE COULD EASILY PHOTOGRAPH THE EMBASSY COMPOUND FROM HIS ROOM AT THE HILTON (HILTON IS 8-STORY BUILDING LOCATED ACROSS THE STREET FROM EMBASSY COMPOUND.) RSO REPLIED THAT THIS WAS CERTAINLY TRUE AND THAT THERE WAS NOTHING EMBASSY COULD DO TO PREVENT IT. AFTER THIS BRIEF EXCHANGE, VISITING AMCIT DEPARTED. TONE OF RSO'S EXCHANGE WITH THIS VISITOR WAS POLITE BUT FIRM. ACCORDING TO RSO, THE EXCHANGE WAS NOT ACrimonious (AND, IN FACT, SCHERMERHORN DOES NOT ALLEGE THAT TONE OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH "YOUNG AMERICAN" WAS UNPLEASANT). RSO REPORTS THAT THE TWO SHOOK HANDS AND THE VISITOR DEPARTED NOT RPT NOT GIVING THE IMPRESSION OF BEING "DEEPLY DISMAYED."

4. AMCIT, WHO WE PRESUME WAS SCHERMERHORN, DID NOT RPT UNCLASSIFIED

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NOT EXPRESS ANY DESIRE TO MEET EMBASSY PERSONNEL, FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES OR EVEN JUST FOR FRIENDLY CHAT. THIS EMBASSY DOES NOT TURN AWAY AMERICAN CITIZENS DURING OFFICE HOURS AND, IN FACT, EMBASSY OFFICERS DEVOTE MANY HOURS WEEKLY TO THE COURTEOUS AND CAREFUL HANDLING OF AMCIT VISITORS, AS OUR FILE OF HIGHLY COMPLIMENTARY LETTERS FROM AMERICANS TESTIFIES. AS FOR MR. SCHERMERHORN'S DISBELIEF THAT "ANY EMBASSY...IS SO BUSY THAT IT CANNOT PROVIDE A FEW MINUTES TO MAKE A CITIZEN WELCOME," THIS CHARGE RANKLES. WE ARE ALL IN FACT SO BUSY THAT THE HOURS WE CONSISTENTLY DO TAKE TO BE NICE TO VISITORS INEVITABLY COSTS US EXTRA TIME, AFTER HOURS, TO COMPLETE OUR REPORTING AND OTHER NECESSARY DUTIES. HAD MR. SCHERMERHORN WISHED TO DISCUSS HIS MISSION IN KUWAIT, OR SEEK OUR ASSISTANCE WITH IT, WE WOULD HAVE FOUND THE EMBASSY READY, WILLING AND ABLE TO BRIEF HIM SO AS TO ENHANCE THE SUCCESS OF HIS VISIT.

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FOR CA, SY, AND NEA/ARP

5. WE DO NOT PROPOSE TO ALTER OUR PRESENT SECURITY POLICIES DESCRIBED ABOVE, WHICH INCLUDE EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT TO BE COURTEOUS TO AMCIT VISITORS. IF DEPARTMENT WISHES US TO BE STILL MORE OPEN IN AFFORDING FREEDOM OF THE EMBASSY COMPOUND TO VISITORS, IN THE FACE OF A SERIOUS AND ONGOING SECURITY RISK, WE WILL REQUIRE ADDITIONAL AMERICAN STAFF TO PROVIDE NECESSARY ESCORT BEFORE WE CAN IMPLEMENT SUCH A CHANGE.

6. DEPARTMENT'S CABLE "NOTES THIS IS SECOND LETTER OF COMPLAINT RECEIVED WITH FEW DAYS OF EACH OTHER" AS IF SOMEHOW THAT FACT WERE PROOF THAT EMBASSY IS NOT PERFORMING PROPERLY. BY OUR CABLE KUWAIT 1474 WE MADE CLEAR THAT WE CONSIDERED THE FIRST OF THESE TWO COMPLAINTS TO BE WITHOUT MERIT. WE LIKEWISE CONSIDER MR. SCHERMERHORN'S COMPLAINT TO BE WITHOUT MERIT. WE SUGGEST THAT IN ITS REPLY DEPARTMENT MAKE USE OF THE FACT, UNDERLYING BOTH COMPLAINTS, THAT PRIVATE AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE NOT USED TO THE KIND OF SECURITY PROCEDURES WITH WHICH WE MUST LIVE; AND THAT, BECAUSE OF LIMITED STAFF, EMBASSIES MUST REPLY ON NON-AMERICAN PERSONNEL TO ASSIST OUR OPERATIONS.

7. DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE AWARE, IN ANY CASE, THAT THERE IS A STEADY TRICKLE OF AMERICANS, RESIDENT HERE OR
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VISITING, WHO BELIEVE THAT AS CITIZENS THEY ARE ENTITLED TO USE ALL EMBASSY FACILITIES, FROM DIPLOMATICALLY PRIVILEGED LIQUOR SALES TO THE EMBASSY SWIMMING POOL. COMPLAINTS ON THIS SCORE, AS ON THE

SECURITY SCORE, ARE INEVITABLE, AND WE WOULD HOPE
DEPARTMENT WOULD KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM WITHOUT
NECESSARILY IMPLYING THAT THE ANGRY CITIZEN IS ALWAYS
RIGHT AND THE FOREIGN SERVICE ALWAYS WRONG. WE ARE
EXTREMELY PROUD OF OUR PERFORMANCE HERE, AS MUCH WITH
RESPECT TO HANDLING AMCIT VISITORS AS IN OUR OTHER
DUTIES, UNDER OFTEN TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES AND WITH
INADEQUATE RESOURCES.

8.EMBASSYWONDERS WHETHER NEA/ARP OR SY WERE CONSULTED
BEFORE REF A WAS SENT, AND SUGGESTS THAT CONSULTATION
WITH THESE OFFICES ON SUCH MATTERS WOULD BE USEFUL.
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